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## ABSTRACT

Replies to a questionnaire relating to development programs in 40 community colleges and technical institutes in North Carolina and Virginia are provided. The questions that comprised the questionnaire were: (1) Describe your procedure for determining the math and English proficiencies of entering freshmen; (2) Do you require for those students who do not meet the proficiency levels any developmental courses that must be taken before the student can enroll in the scheduled courses for his particular curriculum? Please explain; (3) Describe your developmental studies program; (4) What kind of changes have you made in your developmental programs since you began operations?; (5) Do you anticipate any changes in your developmental studies program that might generate more success than you already have? If so, what kind of changes?; and (6) Has a terminal program for mature adults who have few or no skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic been adapted from your developmental studies program? If so, how was it done? And if not, do you think one would work? (If you have such a program, how would you treat a graduate of this terminal program who then desired to enter either a vocational or transfer curriculum, and who still didn't meet the proficiency requirements in verbal or math skills to the extent needed in the desired curriculum? Results of the survey showed that there were almost as many different programs and methods as there were schools. Most were, however, similar in their emphasis on secondary and elementary-level English, reading, and math. Several schools also reported remedial programs in other fields. (DB)

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## DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES IN NORTH CAROLINA AND VIRGINIA:

### A CONSTANT SEARCH FOR ANYTHING THAT WILL WORK

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Much of the success of a community college with an open door policy depends upon the success it has with the students who enter with educational deficiencies or with a history of low achievement to such a degree that they have a below average likelihood of achievement in the regular curriculum. If the open door is not to become the unfortunate revolving door, the developmental studies concept in the community college system is of significant proportions when the goals of the various curriculums are comparatively weighed. Since most community college administrators undoubtedly realize this, they seem to be continuously looking for educational innovations or instructional strategies which might improve their remedial and developmental studies program. Few concerned administrators and faculty members are content with their present programs, usually because they don't feel the subject matter is being sufficiently mastered by their low-achieving students.

In an attempt to "round up" some of the past, present, and future plans for developmental programs in existing community colleges, the following questionnaire was sent to the presidents of seventy-five community colleges and technical institutes in North Carolina and Virginia. The North Carolina system has more than a decade of past experience to draw from, whereas most of the schools in the Virginia Community College system have

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less than five years of developmental efforts. From the returns of the survey, though, the extra years of experience seem to have had little bearing on the schools' everconstant search for a better and more fruitful method of approaching developmental studies.

Here, then, is the questionnaire:

I. Describe your procedure for determining the math and English proficiencies of entering freshmen.

II. Do you require for those students who do not meet the proficiency levels any developmental courses that must be taken before the student can enroll in the scheduled courses for his particular curriculum? Please explain.

III. Describe your developmental studies program.

IV. What kind of changes have you made in your developmental programs since you began operations?

V. Do you anticipate any changes in your developmental studies program that might generate more success than you already have? If so, what kind of changes?

VI. Has a terminal program for mature adults who have few or no skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic been adapted from your developmental studies program? If so, how was it done? And if not, do you think one would work? (If you have such a program, how would you treat a graduate of this terminal program who then desired to enter either a vocational or transfer curriculum and who still didn't meet the proficiency requirements in verbal or math skills to the extent needed in the desired curriculum?)

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Forty of the seventy-five schools completed and returned the questionnaire, which are the responses <sup>we</sup> want to share, hoping either to provide an assortment of new ideas that might be tried, an implication that some already-tried ideas didn't work in other schools either, or an assurance that many faculties and administrators also exist in a seemingly everpresent trial and error status when it comes to devising and implementing a successful developmental studies program.

No school indicated highly satisfactory success in their efforts, whether they called it Guided Studies, General Studies, Developmental Studies, or left the area open for self or suggested referral to the learning lab. The responses displayed a good bit of vague circumlocution, and the strongest positive evaluation given a developmental program was an occasional "seems...satisfactory." The approach of "merging" developmental work with the regular curriculum seems to have provided a few schools with one element of success, since the simultaneous work toward completion of developmental courses along with required curriculum courses offers a motivation factor for the students involved. (One such approach is described in ERIC Topical Paper Number 31.) Of course these schools also admit to significant drawbacks in the "merging" attempt, so that it seems once one problem is solved, another invariably arises. In spite of the frequent indications of varying degrees of lack of success, the pervading tone in almost all of the responses was one of optimism. Even the one Coordinator of Developmental

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Studies from a school that has been in operation for several years who admitted to no success for at least the past two years (his data reveals high student attrition rate and failure in transfer courses) expects his dissatisfaction to give way to something else that might work better.

Because of the variety of approaches being used; because many of the schools were too general in their replies; and because most schools have tried some things in the past, are trying something else now and plan to do something else in the future, a meaningful statistical description of what is going on in developmental programs would be difficult to compile. <sup>we</sup> can indicate some of the methods being used, but <sup>we</sup> cannot safely say how many schools are doing one or the other because many use several at the same time or are in a state of change.

There is a great variety in the method of placement and almost every school indicated a desire for "better methods of placement." Below is a list of tests being used and those cut-off scores which were reported. Altogether the schools mentioned fifteen different tests.

Scholastic Aptitude Test	800
Comparative Guidance and Placement Test	35%
Cooperative English Test	12th grade or 150
Nelson Denny	10th grade
Nelson Denny	57 or 11th grade
College Qualifying Test	

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California Reading Test (This school requires reading for all students, but vocational or technical may place out with these scores.)	12th grade (vocational) 13th grade (technical) Below 9th grade is deficient
Sequential Tests of Educational Progress	11th grade on reading
American College Testing	42 chances out of 100 on math and English
General Aptitude Test Battery	
RFU Placement	
Otis Lennon	
Differential Aptitude Tests	
Pre Math Test composed by N.C. State	75%
Instructor devised tests	
School and College Aptitude Test	270 either verbal or quantitative
School and College Aptitude Test	15% - 40% (this school has a variety of pre- courses for students at different percentile ranks)

We might add here that effective counseling of the students into appropriate curriculums corresponding to their interests, aptitudes, and areas of successful achievement seems to be agreed upon to be part of the answer to student success. Since counseling of the students is often done on the basis of these proficiency examinations given the freshman year, this explains why so much significance apparently is placed on these achievement tests. Before a student is allowed to enter any program of study (whether developmental or otherwise), his entry

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level competencies must be, or should be, accurately determined. But of course we can note the differing levels of achievement the various schools expect as entry level competencies.

Of rather significant interest is the information that almost all of the schools said that students not meeting proficiency levels are not required to enroll in developmental courses before entering curriculum courses. Whereas the different curriculum courses supposedly have fairly rigid entry level requirements (although not all of them are clearly defined), most of the responding schools only have the counselors strongly urge self-referral to the developmental program. This seems to suggest that too much hope or emphasis has been placed on student initiative, which, as many educators are aware, cannot be relied upon. However, a few schools do indicate that they plan to make some phase of their program mandatory, such as:

- Outright mandatory developmental program
- Faculty option to re-enroll the students
- School option to retest the student
- Option of remedial work or do remedial work and curriculum work at the same time
- Referral to programmed materials in LRC

As for the programs themselves, there seems to be about as many different ones and methods as there are schools which

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have them. But essentially most are similar in their emphasis on secondary and elementary level English, reading and math. Several schools reported developmental or remedial programs in such other fields as geometry, trigonometry, chemistry, secretarial science, etc.

One response to question IV, "What kind of changes have you made..." is: "I have discovered that I had made too many assumptions about the entry ability of developmental English students. I now assume nothing about prior knowledge, and have started our study with words rather than with sentences." Practically all schools have made or are making some of the following changes or additions:

Developmental English in grammar for transfer students

Developmental English for technical students

Learning packages on grammar

Separation of English and Reading

Combining remedial English and remedial reading

Required reading course

Changed from completely structured courses to self-paced, multimedia program, and back to lock-step, traditional method at request of the students.

Changed from completely structured courses to audit options

Made part of student's regular curriculum

More faculty

Department status with full time faculty



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More multilevel materials

Increased learning lab staff

Emphasize importance of self-referrals

Use of psychology self-identity course in the first quarter  
instead of the second

More use of the audio-tutorial approach, using visual  
slides to supplement tapes and worksheets

Try to identify deficient students and put them through the  
developmental program during the summer before the fall  
quarter begins. This school works with secondary and  
vocational/technical school faculties to identify the  
students.

An answer to question V, "Do you anticipate any changes....?"  
reads: "Accepting the reality that at least half the students  
we serve need some sort of remedial instruction, we will next  
fall make what is now developmental English our entry level  
course. The same is true for math. The other half of the  
students who do not require remediation will be exempt from  
English and math until the winter quarter."

Some other anticipated changes are:

Release instructor time for preparation and more effective  
implementation

Individualized self-paced packets

Add more math, reading and English faculty

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Move from self-paced multimedia approach back to lock-step  
structured courses

Add human potential and achievement motivation units to  
developmental courses

Add developmental reading for Business Education and

Data Processing students below 25% on Nelson Denny test

Stop using Nelson Denny test

Keep learning lab open longer

Require attendance in learning lab

Initiate federally financed peer-counselor tutor resource  
program

More study space

Make the program mandatory

Plan to recruit high school dropouts, work them through  
the equivalency program, and hope they will enter the  
regular program.

Try to develop more accurate diagnostic procedures in math  
and English

The standard answer for question VI was "We have an Adult  
Basic Education Program." None commented on the particular case  
study we presented, either because they might not have understood  
the question clearly, or because they might not have the answer.

From the dissatisfaction which seems to exist among the  
various community colleges and technical institutes concerning  
their developmental and reading programs, we might suspect

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that many of the responding schools did so in order to receive in return the results of the survey, which was offered to them. Some of the schools seem to imply they are willing to try any approach if someone else has had a fair amount of success with a particular program, and most all of them are in a constant search for something reliably workable. What might be equally as significant as the replies received are those not received. Could it be that their programs are so unsuccessful that they don't want to reveal the information? Or might they not want to share the "success" they are having? One would hardly think they would withhold success; so probably it was just indifference or procrastination in responding. At any rate, it makes us wonder what they are all doing with their developmental programs. On the basis of those returned, we can only surmise the same degrees of dissatisfaction and modifications, which means the area of developmental studies seems to be receptive to any innovative instructional theories or persons.

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